

FROM THE MAY 2 WORKING DRAFT OF THE WOLF CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN – pages 54-57 (without the table on page 55)

E. Components of a Wolf-Livestock Management Program in Washington

The goal of any wolf–livestock management program is to manage wolf-livestock conflicts in a way that gives livestock owners experiencing losses the tools to minimize future losses, while at the same time not negatively impacting the recovery or long-term perpetuation of sustainable wolf populations.

Strategies to address wolf-livestock conflicts are identified in Chapter XII. Management approaches will be based on the status of wolves, while ensuring that conservation/recovery population objectives are met. Non-lethal management techniques will be emphasized while wolves are colonizing and will transition to more flexible approaches as wolves progress toward a delisted status. Depending on circumstances and pack history, management options may include providing non-lethal abatement measures and recommendations, or lethal removal of a wolf or wolves by WDFW or its agents. Emphasis will be placed on non-lethal, low-cost management techniques whenever possible. Actively informing and equipping landowners, livestock producers, and the public with tools to implement non-lethal and proactive wolf management techniques will be an important aspect of the management approach. After wolves reach conservation/recovery objectives, management responses will transition to more flexible approaches. WDFW will be the lead agency to respond to reports of wolf depredation, with potential assistance from USDA Wildlife Services and other entities. Providing compensation for confirmed and probable losses will also be considered in accordance with administrative code and legislative approval of funding.

Wolf-livestock conflicts will be managed using a range of options to prevent depredation and to resolve confirmed or probable depredations (Table 7).

Management options from Table 7 are as follows (criteria for each option are outlined in Chapter XII, Section 4):

Wolf location information: Wolf location information will be provided to livestock owners in all management phases, on both private and public land. WDFW will provide producers with locations of radio-collared wolves living near active livestock operations, so that additional precautions (e.g., extra herders) can be taken to reduce the likelihood of depredation by wolves. Prior to releasing location data, WDFW will develop protocols for data distribution and appropriate safeguards for any “sensitive” data.

Non-injurious harassment: Livestock owners are allowed to harass wolves with non-injurious techniques when wolves are in close proximity to livestock or livestock grazing areas on both private and public land in all phases. These techniques may include, for example, scaring off an animal(s) by firing shots into the air, making loud noises, or otherwise confronting the animal(s) without doing bodily harm

Non-lethal injurious harassment: Non-lethal injurious harassment of wolves is allowed through a WDFW permit to landowners or their designated agents on their own land or to grazing allotment holders using public land. Non-lethal injurious harassment may include techniques such as rubber bullets or beanbag projectiles. A permit and training in the use of rubber bullets is required from WDFW prior to non-lethal injurious harassment.

[Note – the subgroup discussed whether to allow non-lethal injurious harassment to occur without a permit or make it as easy to get a permit as possible once delisting occurs.]

~~Lethal take by state or federal agents for chronic depredation: When appropriate, w~~ Wolves may be lethally removed ~~by state or federal agents on private and public land to stop chronic depredation manage depredation incidents. In general, lethal removal may be used if a wolf or wolf pack has been documented depredating on livestock on 2 or more occasions on one or more properties during a 12-month period, and no unreasonable conditions exist that are attracting wolf-livestock conflict. Situations will, however, be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Wolves may be trapped by USDA Wildlife Services or WDFW, and euthanized or shot. Any lethal removal of wolves will be in accordance with established guidelines, which are linked to recovery phase, as described below: Situations will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In general, lethal removal may be used if a wolf or wolf pack has been documented depredating on livestock on 2 or more occasions on one or more properties during a 12-month period, and no unreasonable conditions exist that are attracting wolf-livestock conflict. The purpose of the lethal removal is to stop chronic depredation.~~

- ~~Lethal take by state or federal agents - Wolves involved in chronic depredation on private or public may be trapped by USDA Wildlife Services or WDFW, and euthanized or shot under all recovery phases.~~
- ~~Lethal take by livestock owners: Landowners and lessees of public land would be allowed to obtain a permit from WDFW to control a limited number of wolves during a specific time period on land they owned or leased if they have suffered chronic wolf depredation. Livestock owners with a permit may be authorized to use lethal force on wolves if they have suffered chronic wolf depredation:~~
 - ~~On private lands only, by permit, when wolves are listed as threatened or sensitive; and~~
 - ~~On both private land and public land allotments, by permit, when wolves are delisted listed as sensitive.~~
 - ~~Anywhere when wolves are initially delisted (Phase IV).~~

~~Landowners and lessees of private land would be allowed to obtain a permit from WDFW to control a limited number of wolves during a specific time period on land they owned or leased if they have suffered chronic wolf depredation.~~

~~Lethal take in the act of attacking: (***) Still under discussion re: when, where, definitions of residence, outbuildings, conditions, pets, etc.)~~ This limited provision would allow lethal take of wolves “in the act of attacking (defined as in the act of actively biting, wounding, or killing livestock) ~~attacking~~ family pets or livestock within 1050 yards of a residence ~~and outbuildings (defined as the actual house where the landowner lives)~~. Public education is necessary for this provision to be used appropriately and to not adversely affect wolf recovery. It is critical to understand that wolves passing near to domestic animals, or stalking animals, are not considered to be ‘in the act of attack’. Wolves passing near domestic animals or stalking animals can and should be deterred with non-lethal methods. ~~(?) Allowed within 100 yards of a primary residence; This management tool may be temporarily rescinded~~ if utilized inappropriately or if there are >2 incidents total within the state annually.?)

(Lethal take by landowners of listed (threatened) wolves “in the act” of attacking livestock is not currently allowed. If there were a need to allow take “in the act,” it would require a statutory change.)

~~Note: Lethal take when harassing ?? — some Working Group members wanted to discuss this. This would be when wolves were harassing (definition??), but not attacking livestock.~~

A reported wolf depredation complaint must be verified as a confirmed or probable wolf depredation before any damage abatement or compensation can be provided. Prompt response by personnel trained in depredation investigation techniques will be critical for determining the validity of a reported complaint. Either WDFW personnel or USDA Wildlife Services personnel will conduct wolf depredation investigations. After the investigation is completed, the complaint will be classified under one of the following categories:

Confirmed Depredation – Clear evidence that wolves were responsible for the depredation, which may include, but is not limited to, evidence from a carcass, such as tooth punctures and associated hemorrhaging, broken bones, and wolf-like feeding patterns, as well as wolf tracks in the immediate vicinity or other wolf sign.

Probable Depredation – Carcass missing or inconclusive, but good evidence of wolf presence exists. This may include, but is not limited to: a characteristic kill site, blood trails, wolf tracks and scat in the immediate vicinity, a baseline history of depredation rates documented by an independent third party, and known presence of wolves and/or a history of wolf depredations in the area.

Confirmed Non-Wolf Depredation – Clear evidence that the depredation was caused by another species, such as coyotes, black bear, cougar, bobcat, domestic dogs, or wolf hybrids. Wolf hybrids and wolves that appear to have been raised in captivity will be treated as domestic animals.

Unconfirmed Loss – Any depredation or livestock loss that does not meet the above criteria.